

To those who served

Veterans Day 2001



CES unveils gift of pride, patriotism

Exterior Electric takes holiday decorating above and beyond with 22,000-bulb Star Spangled Banner

By Staff Sgt. Jim Fisher
3rd Wing Public Affairs

The 3rd Civil Engineer Squadron's exterior electric shop is charged with brightening the holiday season each winter at Elmendorf, making Pease Avenue sparkle by stringing the thoroughfare's trees with Christmas lights.

This year, with many U.S. service-members spending the holidays in harm's way, the squadron wanted to do more.

Touted as a surprise gift to the community, CE unveiled the product of their inspiration Nov. 9 near Hanger 5 on Arctic Warrior Drive — a very patriotic arrangement of 22,000 light bulbs — in the glimmering form of the glorious red, white and blue of the star spangled banner.

The flag in lights, now visible from Arctic Warrior and the surrounding area, was the brainchild of Staff Sgt. Thomas Pontes, a member of the exterior electric shop. CE Operations Flight Commander Maj. Sal Nodjomian asked the shop to come up with ideas to improve this season's display, paving the way to their patriotic spirit to take form.

"In addition to what we normally do on Pease, we wanted to do something more spectacular," Nodjomian said. "So I gave the project to exterior electric and three or four days later SSgt. Pontes came into my office with the concept of the flag in lights."

Pontes had been looking for an opportunity to illuminate his national pride, according to his wife Michelle.

"He thought he was just going to do something little for the front of our house, and it just kind of developed into this big thing," she said, basking in the glow from the just-lit display. "I'm very proud and I'm very happy everyone on base will be able to enjoy it."

To ensure such enjoyment, the details were hammered out over several days, as the CE members came up with a "really classy" display, Nodjomian explained.

"We wanted something that could be used again and again," Nodjomian said. "We picked Nov. 9 to unveil it because it goes with Veterans Day. What started as a holiday display was now a patriotic display, so while we originally planned to have it up through the holidays, it will be up until spring."



MASTER SGT. VALERIE WEAVER

Members of the 3rd Civil Engineer Squadron unveil their holiday gift to the Elmendorf community Nov. 9: a 22,000-bulb display of the American Flag located near Arctic Warrior Drive and Kenney Ave.

Nodjomian said the display serves as an excellent reminder of the many American forces deployed, serving in harm's way. Pontes agrees.

"We all just wanted to do something for those who are deployed and show some spirit back here at home base," Pontes said. "I think it's going to bring out a lot of pride in people."

If instilling pride is the goal, then the display is a success, according to Master Sgt. Bob Stooksbury, a Health and Wellness Center instructor.

"If you had a chance to see even a retreat before Sept. 11, it was an honor. It's much more than that now," Stooksbury said. "I wouldn't have missed this for the world. They did a fantastic job. I've never seen anything like it."

The red, white and blue beacon is also a source of hope.

"It's definitely a morale booster," said Staff Sgt. Bill Reeves of the 3rd Logistics Group Quality Assurance office. "In the gloom and darkness, this just gives us a little more hope that we'll make it through these tough times."

No one in the excited and appreciative crowd was happier than the civil engineers themselves.

"It is an absolutely marvelous piece of work," Nodjomian said. "When we first

threw the switch [in a test run] I was in awe. I was just brimming from ear to ear."

CE leadership was equally pleased with the way the 30-plus people who worked on the project went about getting the job done, Nodjomian explained.

"I want to emphasize that the majority of work was done after duty hours and on weekends," Nodjomian said. "There was a whole lot of volunteer time."

In addition to the altruistic aspect, CE members got the chance to work in disciplines outside of their normal work areas, with carpenters brushing up on their welding skills, and interior electricians working on an exterior project, Nodjomian explained.

"I just want to pay as much credit as I can to SSgt. Pontes and his crew," he said.

Stooksbury was invited to the unveiling by one of the volunteers, whose initiative added meaning to the event.

"One guy that helped came and told me about the [unveiling] and all he would say was that it had to do with the flag," Stooksbury said. "That was enough for me. He's brand new to the base and brand new to the Air Force and his pride in this project really sets the example."

That example will now have the opportunity to shine before thousands of travelers along Arctic Warrior Drive this winter — and hopefully, beyond.

ALS visits, honors preceding generations of comrades in arms

By Senior Airman Connie L. Bias
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Elmendorf's soon-to-be staff sergeants merged past and present Air Force generations when they visited and handed out cards to local veterans Sunday.

The 84 students of Airman Leadership School Class 02-2 chose to deliver the cards as one of their community service projects, a requirement for graduating from the 24-day non-commissioned officer preparatory course.

"The class is divided into three sections: leadership, communication and profession of arms," said Tech. Sgt. Keith Kuipers, ALS instructor. "The profession of arms section includes things like Air Force history, customs and courtesies and Air Force culture, and it also includes a community service section. Every class does something to give back to the community, and every one of the students participates," said Kuipers.

"The instructors threw out some ideas for the project, and we decided to do this," said

Senior Airman Rebecca Durnan, ALS student. "I think it's a great idea. It gets us out in the community, working and helping. People get to see us out there helping others. It gives a positive image."

The class visited four hospitals: the 3rd Medical Group intensive care unit, the Homeless Veterans' Service Domiciliary, Providence Extended Care Center and the Chugiak Senior Center. In addition to handing out Veteran's Day cards, students spent the afternoon with the veterans, sharing military stories and listening to advice from experienced voices.

"Part of the purpose of the community service is to help students understand how much the Air Force is involved in the community, and the positive impact that we as NCOs can have," said Kuipers. "This was an outstanding project. It did exactly what we wanted it to do. It let the veterans know that they're not forgotten, and it allowed the students to see why we're here and that what we do makes sense."



STAFF SGT. THEO MCNAMARA

Nona Johnson (left), a World War II veteran and commander of the only all-female American Legion Post 21, receives a flag from Elmendorf Honor Guard member Staff Sgt. Natarsha Richardson at a ceremony at the Homeless Veterans Service Domiciliary in Anchorage Nov. 9

SECAF, CSAF honor veterans

By Dr. James G. Roche, secretary of the Air Force and
Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force chief of staff

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — For more than 80 years, Americans have reserved one day each autumn to pause and pay tribute to the veterans of our military. In 1921, when this tradition began, it was known as Armistice Day — a day to celebrate the end of the fighting of World War I. But WWI was not the end of all wars, and Americans have had many opportunities to mourn and pay tribute to the continued service and sacrifices of our military veterans. This autumn, in the midst of a war against terrorism, we again take the opportunity to pause and pay tribute to our military veterans. We honor, this Veterans Day, the brave and selfless Americans who have served, as well as those who continue to serve, for the causes of freedom, liberty and justice.